

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 176 360

CS 502 638

TITLE Declaration on Fundamental Principles Concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War.

INSTITUTION United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Paris (France).

PUB DATE 79

NOTE 15p.

AVAILABLE FROM UNIPUB, 345 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10010 (No price quoted)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.

DESCRIPTORS *Civil Liberties; *Cultural Awareness; Developing Nations; Freedom of Speech; *Information Dissemination; *International Education; International Organizations; International Relations; *Mass Media; Peace; Racial Discrimination; Racism; *World Problems

IDENTIFIERS *International Communication

ABSTRACT

Before presenting the declaration passed on November 22, 1978 at the twentieth session of the General Conference of Unesco, this publication reviews the events and resolutions that led up to the passage of the declaration and cites remarks on the declaration made at the close of the session by the Director-General of Unesco. The declaration, presented next, consists of a preamble and 11 articles regarding the rights and responsibilities of the mass media in strengthening peace and international understanding, promoting human rights, and countering racism, apartheid, and incitement to war. Among the topics discussed in the articles are the way the mass media can counter violations of human rights by disseminating information on the aims, aspirations, cultures, and needs of all peoples; the role of the media in educating young people in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding; the need to correct the inequalities in the flow of information to, from, and between developing countries; the need for bilateral and multilateral exchanges of information among all nations; and the obligations of nations to guarantee the existence of favorable conditions for the operation of the mass media. (GT)

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**Declaration
on Fundamental Principles
concerning the Contribution
of the Mass Media
to Strengthening Peace and
International Understanding,
to the Promotion of Human Rights
and to Countering Racialism,
Apartheid
and Incitement to War**

Adopted by acclamation
on 22 November 1978
at the Twentieth Session
of the General Conference
of Unesco held in Paris

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

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CS502638

Published in 1979 by the United Nations
Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris

Composed by Jean-Claude Bellard, Paris
Printed by Imprimerie Boudin, Paris

Printed in France

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At its sixteenth session (1970) the General Conference of Unesco adopted resolution 4.301 in which, 'deeming that information media should play an important part in furthering international understanding and co-operation in the interest of peace and human welfare', it affirmed 'the inadmissibility of using information media for propaganda on behalf of war, racialism and hatred among nations' and invited 'all States to take the necessary steps, including legislative measures, to encourage the use of information media against propaganda on behalf of war, racialism and hatred among nations, and to provide Unesco with information on the subject'.

At its seventeenth session (1972) the General Conference adopted resolution 4.113, in which it requested the preparation of 'a draft declaration concerning the fundamental principles governing the use of the mass information media with a view to strengthening peace and international understanding and combating war propaganda, racialism and apartheid'.

In accordance with this resolution, a meeting of experts (Category VI) was held at Unesco House in March 1974 to advise the Director-General on a text to be submitted to the General Conference at its eighteenth session. As a basis for their discussion the experts had before them a preliminary draft declaration which had been prepared for the Secretariat by a Swedish consultant, Professor Hilding Eek (document COM-74/CONF.616/3). The experts made a detailed examination of this text and formulated a large number of suggestions.

In the light of these suggestions a second version of the draft declaration was prepared. It was this text which was submitted to the

General Conference at its eighteenth session (document 18C/35). The General Conference considered it together with various amendments proposed by Member States (18C/COM/DRs.1 to 11). It decided that the question needed to be studied in depth and accordingly adopted 18C/Resolution 4.111 in which it asked for an intergovernmental meeting of experts (Category II) to be convened to prepare a revised draft declaration.

This intergovernmental meeting was held at Unesco House in December 1975. Among other documents, the participants had before them the draft declaration set out in document 18C/35 and the proposed amendments to this draft contained in documents 18C/COM/Drs.1 to 11, as well as a number of proposed amendments submitted during discussion (COM-75/CONF.201/Drs.1 to 26). The participants drew up a fresh version of the draft declaration to be submitted to the General Conference at its nineteenth session.

After considering this latter version (document 19C/91), the General Conference again requested the preparation of a revised text. It adopted 19C/Resolution 4.143 in which it invited the Director-General 'to hold further broad consultations with experts with a view to preparing a final draft declaration . . . which could meet with the largest possible measure of agreement, as well as to proposing any other action which may be called for in the light of these consultations'. In the same resolution it requested that such a draft declaration be submitted to Member States at the end of 1977 or early in 1978, as well as any other proposal the Director-General might formulate. Lastly, it decided to include this item in the agenda of its twentieth session.

In pursuance of this resolution the Secretariat, with the assistance of consultants, revised the text in the light of the comments made or objections raised during discussion in Nairobi. The revised text, completed in the middle of 1977, was the subject for further consultations—about one hundred persons being consulted. Very varying and frequently even contradictory opinions were expressed by them. The Director-General then considered that he should bring the matter before the Executive Board (item 5.5.4 of the agenda of the 104th session) to inform it that the opinions expressed could be grouped into five broad categories (the revised text is satisfactory; the revised text constitutes an acceptable basis for discussion, subject to improvements at a later date; the revised text is not the kind of document which was expected; a draft declaration is not advisable at the present time; there is no point in any draft declaration); to draw the

Executive Board's attention to the difficulty of the task assigned to him by the General Conference at its nineteenth session; and to ask its advice on the measures to be taken. The Executive Board, 'affirming the possibility of drafting a final declaration which, given the goodwill in the search for a common ground, could meet with the largest possible measure of agreement', invited the Director-General 'to continue his efforts with a view to producing . . . a final draft declaration' (decision 104 EX/SR.34). With the assistance of another group of consultants, the Director-General accordingly prepared a new draft, which he proposed to submit for consideration by the General Conference.

Since it was issued on 6 September 1978, the Draft Declaration in document 20C/20 had aroused keen interest and generated much discussion, which the importance of the subject fully justified.

Not only were statements concerning the text of the Draft Declaration made by most of the heads of delegation in the General Policy Debate; its content was also extensively discussed during the numerous meetings which the Director-General held with the heads of delegation of Member States and with the observers attending the General Conference.

In the light of these statements and consultations and of the discussions which he held in particular with the different regional groups, the Director-General felt able to submit to the General Conference a new text which was in his view likely to command the broad agreement which the General Conference deemed desirable at its nineteenth session. The final text was the result of lengthy and patient negotiations. It took into account the ideas underlying the proposed amendments, and its wording was designed to dispel the misgivings generated by certain misunderstandings.

The Director-General, while presenting the document 20C/20 Rev., noted the determination of the international community to reach a successful conclusion. He expressed his satisfaction that the General Conference had been the occasion of so fruitful and impassioned a debate on the controversial problems of communication.

The Draft Declaration was put to vote on 22 November 1978, as set forth in document 20C/20 Rev., which was adopted by acclamation.

In his speech at the close of the twentieth session of the General Conference, Mr Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director-General of Unesco said:

It seems to me that the spirit of co-operation and the will to reach a consensus, which have gradually increased over the past two years, have emerged strengthened from the twentieth session of the General Conference and have even acquired greater significance. Any misgivings about the difficulties to which one item of the agenda seemed liable to give rise have now been dispelled. They have been effaced by one of the most striking events of this session: the prolonged, standing ovation of an assembly which adopted by acclamation the Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War.

By virtue of the prominence given to it in the debates of the General Conference and in consultations between delegates, the strong emotions and great zeal shown during its final drafting and the interest which it aroused among the mass media, this Declaration was undoubtedly a central feature of the twentieth session of the General Conference.

I must confess that the ovation with which the Declaration was adopted will most certainly remain in my mind as one of the most intensely moving moments which I have experienced as Director-General of Unesco.

For eight years, delegates to the General Conference, experts and specialists from all regions and all countries have held meetings, consultations and discussions, have accumulated projects, counter-projects and amendments, without the international community being able to agree upon a text.

That agreement was reached during the present session of the General Conference. This happy outcome is even more remarkable in that the probabilities of failure seemed great. It is indeed an example of the triumph of patient efforts to achieve conciliation which have never flagged even when faced with the formidable obstacles. It symbolizes the pre-eminence which should be given to the worldwide approach which, while still taking account of specific circumstances, gives pride of place to the common interests of mankind.

The delegates who spoke in the commission in regard to their subscribing to a consensus that some have not hesitated to describe as historic were so kind as to refer to myself and my colleagues—as other delegates have done this evening—in terms that affected me deeply. I should like to thank them here, as I should like to thank all those who, by their acumen, enabled the General Conference to surmount the obstacles, to understand and thus to ensure the triumph of reason.

I should like now, on the basis of so promising a past, to outline the prospects that the adoption of this Declaration adumbrates for our Organization.

In my speech at the closure of the general policy debate I stressed how essential it was to define taking into account the variety and development of communication systems, a new set of moral principles which all creators and distributors of information would be able to endorse. Now that this Declaration has been adopted, this has to a certain extent been achieved. It is a fact of major importance that, for the first time, the international community has at its disposal a body of principles and ideals such as can provide guidance for the action and practice of all those whose hearts are set on justice and peace.

As for the Organization itself, the Declaration further underpins its efforts to create the necessary conditions for a freer, broader and more balanced flow of information and to protect journalists and news reporters in the exercise of their functions.

Encouraged by the extreme attention you have given during this General Conference to the problems of communication and by the leading importance you have assigned to the Declaration, the Organization will pursue its efforts in the field of studies and practical measures.

The fact that the Declaration was adopted unanimously seems to betoken an intensification of the desire for co-operation, but also of the ethical role of the Organization.

But we must not overlook other important decisions that were taken, which also have an ethical bearing, thus confirming the Organization's mission in this sphere.

Mention should be made first of all of the adoption, again by acclamation, of the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice.

For the first time in the United Nations system, and even in the history of the protracted efforts of mankind to banish racialism and racial prejudice, the international community will have at its disposal a text that, without being legally binding, represents a moral and ethical undertaking encompassing *all* aspects of a problem that, sad to say, is still very much with us. Thus the biological, sociological, cultural, economic and political aspects of the problem are covered in this instrument which we would like to see give rise to as many hope and practical measures as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the thirtieth anniversary of which we celebrated yesterday evening.

Nothing better illustrates the vitality of our Organization; nothing bears greater witness to the desire of its Member States to achieve harmony than the adoption of such a Declaration, which now belongs to all mankind.

DECLARATION ON FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES
CONCERNING THE CONTRIBUTION
OF THE MASS MEDIA
TO STRENGTHENING PEACE
AND INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING,
TO THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
AND TO COUNTERING RACIALISM,
AFARTHEID AND INCITEMENT TO WAR

Preamble

The General Conference,

Recalling that by virtue of its Constitution the purpose of Unesco is to 'contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms' (Art. I, 1), and that to realize this purpose the Organization will strive 'to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image' (Art. I, 2),

Further recalling that under the Constitution the Member States of Unesco, 'believing in full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives' (sixth preambular paragraph),

Recalling the purposes and principles of the United Nations, as specified in its Charter,

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948 and particularly Article 19 thereof, which provides that 'everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of

frontiers'; and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1966, Article 19 of which proclaims the same principles and Article 20 of which condemns incitement to war, the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred and any form of discrimination, hostility or violence.

Recalling Article 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1965, and the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1973, whereby the States acceding to these Conventions undertook to adopt immediate and positive measures designed to eradicate all incitement to, or acts of, racial discrimination, and agreed to prevent any encouragement of the crime of apartheid and similar segregationist policies or their manifestations,

Recalling the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1965,

Recalling the declarations and resolutions adopted by the various organs of the United Nations concerning the establishment of a new international economic order and the role Unesco is called upon to play in this respect,

Recalling the Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Co-operation, adopted by the General Conference of Unesco in 1966,

Recalling Resolution 59(I) of the General Assembly of the United Nations, adopted in 1946 and declaring:

'Freedom of information is a fundamental human right and is the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated;

.....
Freedom of information requires as an indispensable element the willingness and capacity to employ its privileges without abuse. It requires as a basic discipline the moral obligation to seek the facts without prejudice and to spread knowledge without malicious intent;

.....
Recalling Resolution 110(II) of the General Assembly of the United Nations, adopted in 1947, condemning all forms of propaganda

which are designed or likely to provoke or encourage any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression,

Recalling resolution 127(II), also adopted by the General Assembly in 1947, which invites Member States to take measures, within the limits of constitutional procedures, to combat the diffusion of false or distorted reports likely to injure friendly relations between States, as well as the other resolutions of the General Assembly concerning the mass media and their contribution to strengthening peace, trust and friendly relations among States,

Recalling resolution 9.12 adopted by the General Conference of Unesco in 1968, reiterating Unesco's objective to help to eradicate colonialism and racialism, and resolution 12.1 adopted by the General Conference in 1976, which proclaims that colonialism, neo-colonialism and racialism in all its forms and manifestations are incompatible with the fundamental aims of Unesco,

Recalling resolution 4.301 adopted in 1970 by the General Conference of Unesco on the contribution of the information media to furthering international understanding and co-operation in the interests of peace and human welfare, and to countering propaganda on behalf of war, racialism, apartheid and hatred among nations, and *aware* of the fundamental contribution that mass media can make to the realizations of these objectives,

Recalling the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice adopted by the General Conference of Unesco at its twentieth session,

Conscious of the complexity of the problems of information in modern society, of the diversity of solutions which have been offered to them, as evidenced in particular by the consideration given to them within Unesco, and of the legitimate desire of all parties concerned that their aspirations, points of view and cultural identity be taken into due consideration,

Conscious of the aspirations of the developing countries for the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order,

Proclaims on this twenty-eighth day of November 1978 this Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War.

Article I

The strengthening of peace and international understanding, the promotion of human rights and the countering of racialism, apartheid and incitement to war demand a free flow and a wider and better balanced dissemination of information. To this end, the mass media have a leading contribution to make. This contribution will be the more effective to the extent that the information reflects the different aspects of the subject dealt with.

Article II

1. The exercise of freedom of opinion, expression and information, recognized as an integral part of human rights and fundamental freedoms, is a vital factor in the strengthening of peace and international understanding.
2. Access by the public to information should be guaranteed by the diversity of the sources and means of information available to it, thus enabling each individual to check the accuracy of facts and to appraise events objectively. To this end, journalists must have freedom to report and the fullest possible facilities of access to information. Similarly, it is important that the mass media be responsive to concerns of peoples and individuals, thus promoting the participation of the public in the elaboration of information.
3. With a view to the strengthening of peace and international understanding, to promoting human rights and to countering racialism, apartheid and incitement to war, the mass media throughout the world, by reason of their role, contribute to promoting human rights, in particular by giving expression to oppressed peoples who struggle against colonialism, neo-colonialism, foreign occupation and all forms of racial discrimination and oppression and who are unable to make their voices heard within their own territories.
4. If the mass media are to be in a position to promote the principles of this Declaration in their activities, it is essential that journalists and other agents of the mass media, in their own country or abroad, be assured of protection guaranteeing them the best conditions for the exercise of their profession.

Article III

1. The mass media have an important contribution to make to the strengthening of peace and international understanding and in countering racialism, apartheid and incitement to war.
2. In countering aggressive war, racialism, apartheid and other violations of human rights which are *inter alia* spawned by prejudice and ignorance, the mass media, by disseminating information on the aims, aspirations, cultures and needs of all peoples, contribute to eliminate ignorance and misunderstanding between peoples, to make nationals of a country sensitive to the needs and desires of others, to ensure the respect of the rights and dignity of all nations, all peoples and all individuals without distinction of race, sex, language, religion or nationality and to draw attention to the great evils which afflict humanity, such as poverty, malnutrition and diseases, thereby promoting the formulation by States of the policies best able to promote the reduction of international tension and the peaceful and equitable settlement of international disputes.

Article IV

The mass media have an essential part to play in the education of young people in a spirit of peace, justice, freedom, mutual respect and understanding, in order to promote human rights, equality of rights as between all human beings and all nations, and economic and social progress. Equally, they have an important role to play in making known the views and aspirations of the younger generation.

Article V

In order to respect freedom of opinion, expression and information and in order that information may reflect all points of view, it is important that the points of view presented by those who consider that the information published or disseminated about them has seriously prejudiced their effort to strengthen peace and international understanding, to promote human rights or to counter racialism, apartheid and incitement to war be disseminated.

Article VI

For the establishment of a new equilibrium and greater reciprocity in the flow of information, which will be conducive to the institution of a just and lasting peace and to the economic and political independence of the developing countries, it is necessary to correct the inequalities in the flow of information to and from developing countries, and between those countries. To this end, it is essential that their mass media should have conditions and resources enabling them to gain strength and expand, and to co-operate both among themselves and with the mass media in developed countries.

Article VII

By disseminating more widely all of the information concerning the universally accepted objectives and principles which are the bases of the resolutions adopted by the different organs of the United Nations, the mass media contribute effectively to the strengthening of peace and international understanding, to the promotion of human rights, and to the establishment of a more just and equitable international economic order.

Article VIII

Professional organizations, and people who participate in the professional training of journalists and other agents of the mass media and who assist them in performing their functions in a responsible manner should attach special importance to the principles of this Declaration when drawing up and ensuring application of their codes of ethics.

Article IX

In the spirit of this Declaration, it is for the international community to contribute to the creation of the conditions for a free flow and wider and more balanced dissemination of information, and of the conditions for the protection, in the exercise of their functions, of journalists and other agents of the mass media. Unesco is well placed to make a valuable contribution in this respect.

Article X

1. With due respect for constitutional provisions designed to guarantee freedom of information and for the applicable international instruments and agreements, it is indispensable to create and maintain throughout the world the conditions which make it possible for the organizations and persons professionally involved in the dissemination of information to achieve the objectives of this Declaration.
2. It is important that a free flow and wider and better balanced dissemination of information be encouraged.
3. To this end, it is necessary that States facilitate the procurement by the mass media in the developing countries of adequate conditions and resources enabling them to gain strength and expand, and that they support co-operation by the latter both among themselves and with the mass media in developed countries.
4. Similarly, on a basis of equality of rights, mutual advantage and respect for the diversity of the cultures which go to make up the common heritage of mankind, it is essential that bilateral and multilateral exchanges of information among all States, and in particular between those which have different economic and social systems, be encouraged and developed.

Article XI

For this declaration to be fully effective it is necessary, with due respect for the legislative and administrative provisions and the other obligations of Member States, to guarantee the existence of favourable conditions for the operation of the mass media, in conformity with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with the corresponding principles proclaimed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1966.